

Central Intelligence Agency



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**DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE**

23 January 1984

Japanese Views of the Soviet Union

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Soviet-Japanese relations, cool and businesslike at best, have deteriorated to a postwar low. The KAL incident reinforced popular Japanese antipathy toward the USSR and at least temporarily silenced the small, ineffectual groups receptive to Soviet points of view. [redacted]

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The Soviet military buildup in East Asia has made more Japanese view the Soviet Union as a direct threat to Japan. This, in turn, has underscored the need for firm ties to the United States and a gradual strengthening of Japan's defenses. Most Japanese, however, still do not perceive the Soviet threat as serious enough to require a major change in defense policy. [redacted]

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Soviet occupation of the Southern Kuriles remains the major irritant.

- Moscow refuses to consider Japanese claims to these islands occupied at the end of the war.
- Tokyo insists that relations cannot improve significantly until the Soviet Union comes to terms.
- The Soviets have aggravated the issue since 1978 by new troop deployments and, more recently, by bolstering air

*This memorandum was prepared by Japan Branch, Northeast Asia Division, Office of East Asian Analysis. Information available as of 20 January was used in its preparation.* [redacted]

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defenses on the islands. [REDACTED]

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Although Japanese businessmen remain interested in expanding trade with the Soviet Union, they are less enthusiastic than in the 1970s.

- Japan's economic relations with Soviet Union are not extensive: the Soviet share of Japanese imports was only 1.3 percent in 1982; for exports, 2.8 percent.
- Except for the Sakhalin oil and gas project, Japanese businessmen are no longer interested in large-scale Siberian resource development projects.
- Only the construction machinery and steel pipe industries view the Soviet Union as a key market. [REDACTED]

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Japan has participated with other Western nations in sanctions against the USSR in response to the KAL incident and Soviet involvement in Poland and in Afghanistan. At the same time, Tokyo is reluctant to see relations deteriorate any further. Moscow's military power reinforces the government's conviction that it would not be in Japan's best interest to isolate the USSR. [REDACTED]

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Since his reappointment as Foreign Minister in December, Shintaro Abe has publicly identified improvement in Soviet-Japanese relations as the "greatest task of the second term of Abe diplomacy."

- The press has reported that he would like an early meeting with Gromyko, perhaps in a third country.
- A senior Foreign Ministry official has told the US Embassy that, as a politician with prime ministerial ambitions, Abe is indeed interested in a move to break the diplomatic stalemate with Moscow.
- For now, he has agreed to abide by Foreign Ministry policy, which insists that Moscow take the initiative, preferably with a Gromyko visit to Tokyo. Abe may succumb to political temptation, however and initiate a meeting with the Soviet Foreign Minister in the coming months. [REDACTED]

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**SUBJECT: Japanese Views of the Soviet Union**

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